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HENRY WARD BEECHER.



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EXTENT OF THE DIVINE LAW.

“And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness.”—ROM. viii., 10.

As more and more is known of the nature of the human mind, and of its social and physical relations, more and more light is thrown upon these two matchless chapters of psychology—the deepest in all literature—the 7th and 8th of Romans. And although the terminology is of the age in which they were written, and the illustrations Jewish, yet, by translations, they will be made conformable to the ripest and latest knowledge which we have of the operations of the human mind, of the nature of responsibility, and of suffering under law, from conscious violation of it, and those reachings and yearnings for the peace which accompanies a sense of perfection, instead of the hopelessness of finding that perfection by obedience to the law, and, most blessed, for the opening of that glorious truth of God which was made manifest in Jesus Christ, that there is rest for sinful men, and triumph for those who are perpetually defeated by temptation.

But we are yet to grow through long ranges of knowledge before we reach the fullness of the comprehension, either of the 7th of Romans, which depicts a man struggling with conscious imperfection, or the 8th of Romans, which is a disclosure of the higher spiritual life triumphing over the lower and animal life, and reaching far into the invisible and spiritual world, and taking hold of the very nature and substance of the heavenly land, and of the Spirit of God himself.

Much dispute has arisen in respect to the question whether or not man is a sinful creature—dispute which has come,

largely, from an infelicitous mode of exposition. Of the fact itself, the whole creation that groans and travails in pain until now, is an unimpeachable witness. If there be no other thing true under the sun, it is true that all who are born of woman are born into imperfection—an imperfection breeding sin, a sin breeding misery, and a misery breeding infinite yearnings—yearnings that are blind, and that know not which way to lift themselves.

There is an impression, when we are speaking of law, that sin is simply the conscious violation of a given law. Paul speaks of the law as disclosing sin. “I had not known sin, if the law had not said, ‘Thou shalt not covet.’” A rule of duty, a rule of life, or a commandment (whatever term you choose to call it by), measures men’s obligations: and right and wrong, in the great majority of instances, is known, not from the nature of things, the organic law of creation, but simply from the commandment or the uttered law. Therefore the word of God, as it is recorded in the Bible, is said to be the law of life, not because it is the full declaration of that law, but because it is an interpretation by imperfect men of that which they were not competent to understand—namely, the law of God as it exists in the organic creation of mankind.

No matter what a physician says, and no matter whether he says anything, if you over-eat, you will find that the law is after you, for there is a law of the stomach. And if you over-watch, you will find that the law is after you. There has been no exposition of it. You stumble on its sharp edge; it cuts you—and that is the revelation of it. The penalty teaches it. And so, little by little, men have learned to deal with substances, to moderate their desires, etc. They have selected food and occupations and raiment; they have built dwellings; they have conformed themselves to climates, and measured their strength and their nervous vitality; and, little by little, they have found out what were the elementary laws of their creation.

There was no book of science which accompanied man’s birth into this world. There was nothing that taught him of bone and muscle. The heart had beat four thousand

years before men knew that there was a circulation of the blood, and then they did not know what it circulated for—that it carried food-tissue to every part of the human system; and yet, in all this time of darkness, there were certain fundamental laws on which men depended for existence and for happiness; and these laws meant just the same then that they do now. They were the original laws or conditions of existence and happiness, and they are as much in force to-day as they were at that time. A law is some rule of conduct laid down according to the original nature which was infixed in man at his creation.

Thus, if you were to receive from an expert physician a line of rules or precepts in respect to rising early, bathing, suitable clothes, proper food, the warmth or coldness of food, the use of the right kinds of food and the right kinds of liquids, the labor which it is right to engage in, the amount of labor to be performed, the pauses in labor, the various relations of the body to times and seasons and to occupations,—if you were to receive from an expert physician a line of rules or precepts in respect to these things, he would interpret to you in words that which inhered in you before. These rules, or precepts, or laws, would but express what was beforehand implied in the existence and structure of the body.

So then, a man may live in a world of laws which he does not understand, perpetually suffering in consequence of violations of them, because he does not know what they are, or how they operate, since they have not been interpreted to him.

Therefore the apostle says that the commands given to the Jews (in so far as there was a system of rules given to them to regulate their life and conduct in society, and in their various relations to each other), revealed sin to them—interpreted to them what was right and wrong; and so you see variations from that interpretation or revelation of right and wrong in men's conduct or course of life.

Now, consider for a moment what is the complexity of the laws under which men are living. Bear in mind that the original conditions of things, that the organic creative ele-

ments, are the foundations of law, and that a command is but putting into language a truth that existed before there was any command.

The physical and the organic laws I have already alluded to. In regard to the more serious violations of law in his physical constitution, a man finds the interpretation of the law and of the penalty in his experience. No man, whether he understands the nature of things or not, puts his hand into the fire without feeling that he has violated a law. A chemist who, in a laboratory, puts together two or three unknown substances, so that an explosion takes place and throws him to the other side of the room, has no doubt that there is a law which he has run counter to. Men find out laws by the suffering which the violation of them entails, or by the benefit which accrues from them; and in regard to the great bodily laws, or laws that have use through our body, there is comparatively a practical knowledge.

But then, we are not simply isolated, living in contact with the globe, and by our physical bodies. What we are, we never could develop, if there were no other persons with whom we were associated. How could I love a tree, if I were on a desolate island where there was nothing but trees? How could I ever have sympathy, if I lived among rocks, where there were no human beings? That of which I have a component in my own mind, and which is essential to its full disclosure or out-play; those ten thousand interchanges of imagination, or aspiration, or co-operation in zeal and labor,—these could have no expression in a dungeon, or on a desolate island, or in any isolation whatever. A man must live with mankind, in order to be himself. An individual is born of society; and as society is the aggregate of individuality, no man could be what he is, if it were not for the influences which flow in upon him from his fellows. And that society which, like the ocean, sends its tides in on the individual, is itself the product of a multiplication of these individuals; so that, through both, cause and effect act reciprocally.

But now comes the question, how to live together in society relations. There is a truth underlying the one which I have just been expounding. How to live with my body in

relation to air, water, fire, magnetism, sharp-cutting rocks, iron, wild beasts, etc.,—that is one department, and that I have learned little by little ; but then I have a life with my fellow-men, which is called my civil relation. Gradually, through thousands of groaning years, men have found out how to live among themselves ; and the methods by which men live with each other are called rules or laws of society. Some parts of them are embodied in civil law. Men feel how necessary the State is to the individual : this feeling has organized the State ; and in order to its preservation, certain great elements, negative and positive—things to be avoided and things to be done—have been ordained into laws and commandments ; and so many of them as are necessary for the well-being of society, surround every one of us.

I wake up out of unconscious infancy into nascent boyhood and manhood ; and I know but little of the laws that pertain to my body, and still less of the laws that pertain to my fellow-men. I am a living and crying animal, that runs stumbling hither and thither in regard to natural things. From suffering I learn wisdom ; but in respect to the great out-world I know nothing. I do not understand the texture, the structure, or the institutions of the State. I do not understand any of my obligations to the State, as a boy-citizen—for I am not a citizen. I am zero to the whole State. The State counts my father and my mother, but it does not count me until I am of age. Twenty-one years pass before a man is born into the State—and that is premature often. I am counted as a know-nothing until I have had time to learn ; and the State says, “ You are not accountable, or you are less accountable, or you are only partially accountable, until you come to years of discretion ; ” and when I come to these years, and assume little by little the obligations of manhood, think of how many things lie in the statute-book and in the common law of which I am ignorant. Think how many places there are where “ thou shalt ” is brought to bear upon me in the daily affairs of life, and how many other places, where “ thou shalt not ” blocks up temptation, and shuts the door of importunity.

Man is a creature that stands inwebbed in laws of which

he is more or less ignorant ; and these laws increase, multiply, and become more and more complex, as a man comes into society.

As if it were not enough that this great legislative globe should be hidden, and only gradually disclosed ; as if it were not enough that the mighty laws on which life itself and the right use of every part of the physical frame depend should confront us, we are admitted, as we grow in age and experience, into a still wider sphere of observation, which spreads out as society becomes more and more complex, as its interests multiply—as its wealth increases—opening realm after realm in life, each of which imposes some new law upon us, and teaches us how to get along—how to act and how to avoid action—as circumstances may require. Every new plane of knowledge is in the nature of a command which reveals to us some obligation.

But, as if that were not enough, there are infinite laws within laws ; for the State cannot regulate the household. The State cannot regulate public opinion. The State, except in mere externals, cannot regulate customs, trades, guilds, literature, the various departments into which men are perpetually dividing themselves up.

The child, while it begins to learn its duties as a citizen, finds itself in a little legislative hall of its own, where it is obliged to learn how to get along with father and mother, sisters and brothers, the servants, and those with whom it comes in contact at home ; and it is a different kind of getting along from that which he learns in respect to the State.

I am not obliged to run and put a chair, or draw back from the favorite dish, or be courteous, or exchange the civilities of the morning, in my relation to the man who lives across the street, whose house is shut up, and whom I never see ; but I am brought cheek to cheek, hand to hand, heart to heart, with my household. There is a commonwealth of the family whose laws are so distinct, so subtle, and so delicate, that they cannot be extended to the larger commonwealth of the State or of society, with its penalties and remunerations.

When I step outside of the household into this greater commonwealth of civil laws and natural laws—into the neighborhood, that other jurisdiction of public sentiment—first, it would seem, comes the great physical God, writing on all the substances of creation, “This is my law! this is my law! this is my law!”

Then comes society, and, looking to see what is lacking, writes another volume in regard to our conduct and relations to each other in civil organization, and says, “This is the law! this is the law! this is the law!”—and the volume is multitudinous and swells infinitely, almost.

Then comes the great body of citizens that, without legislation, without consultation, say, “If thou dressest so and so thou shalt go up, but if thou dost not dress so and so thou shalt not; if thou speakest thus and thus thou shalt be admitted to the highest circle, but if thou dost not speak thus and thus, thou shalt not; if thou hast courtesy and refinement and attainment thou shalt have such and such remunerations, but if thou hast not these things, and art vulgar and poor and mean, thou shalt not.”

Looking at what nature has legislated, it is not enough; and looking at what society has legislated, that is not enough: and so public sentiment comes in, and marks down more laws, and more laws, and more laws; and they are laws which are expressed, not so much by any written edict or any pronounced statute, as by men’s recognition of them. Men recognize them as the thermometer does the temperature of summer or winter, by the way they feel.

Surely, man has laws enough; and is he made for nothing but to be tied up like a fly in a spider’s web, caught and held by its leg or wing? He is made to be operated upon and educated by these laws. If he employs them aright, he will grow stronger and stronger, and, by and by, he will be superior to them. Their purpose is to tell him how to be larger; how to be better and stronger; how to maintain himself more worthily in society with its public sentiment, by which he is judged in a thousand matters of taste and disposition and conduct.

Is not that enough? Oh, no. Whenever a man goes out

into society, and enters any particular department of labor, he shall find that that department has its own peculiar laws within all the others. If he be a scholar, a scientist, a literary man, he finds something that nature has said nothing about, that society has said nothing about in its civil organization, and that public sentiment has taken no account of. The moment he comes into scientific, or learned, or literary associations, he meets new expectations, requirements, conditions. At every turn in life he meets some law, or command, or rule. Thus rules, commands, laws are infinitely and incessantly multiplied.

Then men say, and say wisely, that a true and large man, who has aspiration, ought to be more than is demanded of him by society, or by any section of it; that he ought to be superior to any law; that he should have in himself a sense of manhood requiring taste of a larger and finer quality than any taste that is required by the law of the land; that he should have a humanity larger than any humanity that is required by public sentiment; that his standard of manhood in himself should be incomparably higher than any regulations or demands of society.

So, not satisfied with being thus enmeshed in laws, a man becomes a law unto himself, and exercises his reason, and cultivates the heroic element, and judges himself by higher standards, and lifts before him a spiritual portraiture with which he compares his own spiritual countenance. In that way he becomes the severest legislator who sits upon his case. A man himself is severer with himself than any one else, if he is a man. If he is a fool, he is full of apologies for himself; but if he is a man, he is full of requisitions, demanding of himself more than the law demands, more than society demands, more than the public sentiment demands, more than any sphere of business demands, more than any profession demands—something that shall make him worthy of the name of a son of God.

But men say, "Besides all these, there are the laws of God." No; these are the laws of God. When a man would obey the command, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart," how does he do it? God's com-

mands are interpreted in the physical world, in the social world, in the civil world, in all the relations of life. That which shall make a man the largest, the wisest, the strongest, the best, in every relation, is the fullest interpretation which we can have in this world of the laws of God. We are commanded to love God with all our heart and soul and mind and strength; and that command endures, but, blessed be God, Christ has interpreted it. When he said, with all the nations gathered together in judgment, "I was sick, and in prison, and ye came not to me; I was poor and needy and distressed, and ye did not care for these things;" and they said, "When?" and he replied, "Inasmuch as ye did it not to the least of my brethren, ye did it not to me,"—then he interpreted God's laws to men. God is in this sense pantheistic: that he lives in each soul; that his heart palpitates in every single creature; and when we think of the commands of God, we are not to think of them as insphered, crystal-like, above. He is speaking to us out of the rock, out of the soil, out of the seasons, out of trees, out of men, out of society, out of business. The manifold voice of God spells words letter by letter, and forms sentences word by word, out of the variety of things in which man touches life; and he who obeys this voice obeys the sovereign primal command of God, who dwells in eternity. The world is a book of legislation; and the higher we rise, or the deeper we go down, the more we become acquainted with the commands of God.

Now, no man ever did, and no man ever can, keep God's commands, when you interpret them in this way. The Psalmist said, "Thy commandments are exceeding broad;" and when you interpret them in a spiritual sense, they are broad indeed. The Ten Commandments, which were given on Mount Sinai, were given, evidently, with reference to the safety of man in the lower relations of life. They are so many bulwarks against the passions of mankind. Thou shalt worship no other God, nor shalt thou take the name of the Lord in vain; thou shalt not kill; thou shalt not commit adultery; thou shalt not steal; thou shalt not, thou shalt not, thou shalt not; shalt not, shalt not, shalt

not ; not, not, not ;—these commands are, as it were, so many banks or levees against the fiery passions of mankind ; but they are not all of God's commandments. The laws which belonged to the Jewish economy were not all of God's commandments. The laws which came through the prophets, major and minor, were not all of God's commandments. The laws which were evolved in the teachings of the Saviour, and in the teachings of the apostles after him, together with what has sprung up since that time, are not all of God's commandments.

Put an unskilled child in the midst of that great city of sounds, the organ, and let him begin, unknowing, to make harmony. Some of those mighty pipes are so large that he cannot tune them and manage them. There are so many of them, and he is so ignorant of them, that no sooner does he go in and work at one, and fix it, and come out to the keyboard to try it, than, though that may be proximately correct, when he draws another, there is discord elsewhere. When he finds that there is a clashing and battling of sounds in the instrument, back he goes to rectify the fault of the offending pipe ; and in doing that he produces conflict somewhere else. So, as soon as he gets one stop right, others are deranged. He is utterly incompetent, with his want of knowledge and experience, to manage this complex instrument, which is the fruit of ages. It is only by long years of study and practice that he can become familiar with it in all its parts.

Now, man is vaster and more complex than any cathedral organ. His faculties are more potential than any sounding pipes. His nature, above and below, is more capable of infinite expansion. He learns slowly. And now, after we have learned for five or six thousand, and it may be for ten or fifteen thousand, years, we have but just begun to learn what is the capacity of the human mind, and what are those relations which are increasing as fast as we increase. And to say that any man ever lived who fulfilled the law of God, in this large consideration of it, will strike every one as strange. If you say that the law of God is merely the Ten commandments, many a man can keep them, and say,

“What lack I yet?” Christian culture brings men inside of the Ten Commandments. There are thousands and thousands of men who do not touch them, or come in sight of them. They are born higher than the Ten Commandments.

I never would steal, even if there were no laws against it. You might unlock your safe, and throw your keys into the sea, and I would not take your money. I refrain from stealing, not because I am afraid of jails, but because I am an honest man. It would hurt me more than it would you, if I were to steal your money. I am not tempted at all in that direction. Therefore the command, “Thou shalt not steal,” has no application to me,—thanks to my father, and to his father, and to his father, and to his father, through a line of honest men. For I know I had an honest ancestry; I feel it in every part of my nature. Therefore I am relieved from bondage to that law: it is obligatory upon me; but I fulfilled it before I knew it.

Now, when you ask, “Are you a perfect man,” or “Are you a depraved, imperfect, sinful man?”—if you take a very narrow and external criterion of judgment, many men say, “What lack I yet? Why am I not perfect? I have kept all these commands from my youth up.” The way to corner them is to say, “You may have kept them outwardly, in a bodily sense; but you have not kept them inwardly, in a spiritual sense.” When you thus attack a man with metaphysics, you can puzzle him. You can so confuse him in five minutes that he does not know where he stands. So, when men say they are perfect because they have kept the whole law, we run them down with a spiritual explanation, and say, “You have kept the Ten Commandments, but have you kept the laws that are inherent in your physical frame?” Have you never gone to excess in under-indulgence or over-indulgence? Has all the law that relates to the whole economy of the body, which is God’s temple, and which is to be sacred to you, been fulfilled steadily all your life long? “But I didn’t know.” “Nevertheless, you broke the law.” “Oh, yes; but the circumstances were peculiar.” “Yes, that is the devil’s name—*Peculiar Circumstances*.” “But, I had to do it.” “Oh, of course, you had to do it: but the question is

not how far you are excusable; the question is, Have you broken the law an indefinite number of times—that law which relates to the maintenance of your happiness? Look at that law which applies to the passions of mankind—their anger, their combativeness, their self-defensory powers, those elements of their being which unite them to the lower ranges of society, to say nothing of those higher moral laws which refer to the mental and spiritual life of men, and tell me if you have not violated that. Have you understood it? Have you had a full conception of the relation of laws, as regulating all the passions and appetites of your nature? Have you not, on the other hand, been, to a great degree, ignorant of them? and have you not gone like a shuttlecock between two battle-dores, between peace and anger, between benevolence and cruelty, between desire and indifference, and between under and over excitement?”

When you look at what is embodied in the air, in the writing of God on the rock, in the various developments of nature; when you look at the divine command which is implied in the economy of your passions and appetites, is there any man who can stand up and say to himself, “I have not sinned”? Have you done anything else? Has not sinning been the business of your life? Is not imperfection, imperfection, imperfection stamped on your every act? Imperfections at the top may be more or less palliable, but at the bottom they are sin. Consider the relations of affection and of interlacing affinity which you sustain to your fellow-men. Consider all those obligations of delicacy, of happiness-breeding, and of joy-inspiring, which you have toward others. Consider that law in accordance with which your business is to live centrifugally and not centripetally—in accordance with which you are bound, not to open yourselves like a vortex and draw in happiness from every one else, but to open yourself and pour out happiness upon others besides yourself. Think of the obligation under which you are placed by the command, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” Consider the application of that law to the children, to the servants, to the parents, to the disagreeable people that happen to board with you, to men in your trade

that you do not like, to small men, to mean men, to sharp men, to angry men, to old hunkses around about you, to every sort of creature—for Noah's ark is all alive again, and we have everything in it—that is, to human society. You are under that law. You are not to pick out those that you choose, and love them. You are to love your neighbor as yourself. And who is your neighbor? Everybody that needs you.

Now, what has been the carriage of your affections? Have you loved your neighbor as yourself? Can anybody say that he has fulfilled the law of God, as it is written in his affections? I know by the expression on your upturned faces that you recognize the law of God as holy, and just, and good; and can any of you, looking back upon your life, and judging it by those laws, say other than this: "I have been all my days a miserable sinner against God's righteous commands"?

Rise higher than that, and consider what your relations are, measured, not by the lower standards of this world, but by the higher standards of the world which is to come. Consider that you are an unfolding creature, and that by reason, by moral sense, by faith, by imagination, you take hold upon the eternities. Consider that you are so to live as that the body shall be dead, as it were, in comparison with the higher faculties. Consider that the center of life, the legislative hall of the soul, is to lie in the neighborhood of benevolence and conscience and reason.

Now ask yourselves: Have you lived there? Have you lived at the center of those radiations of obligation which take in universal being, and which bring you into sympathetic relations with the beast, with the bird, with the worm, with everything that pulsates or has susceptibility, in the lower realm of being, as well as with the angel, and the archangel, and the God over all, blessed forever? Have you lived in accordance with the fundamental law of your nature, and with your knowledge of your obligations? Is there a man that, looking at the comprehensive relations of manhood, and at the infinite depths of the soul's obligations, can say, "I am perfect"? Must not every man, in the light of those

relations and obligations, lay his hand upon his mouth, and his mouth in the dust, and say, "Unclean, unclean! God be merciful to me a sinner"?

Well, secondly, in application, when a man is determined that he will live according to the law of God, he enters with a most serious purpose upon a life of obedience. Men think, because they are convicted, and have the Holy Spirit, that they have got over the worst part of their journey. They have been convicted, they have been hopefully converted, ministers smile on them and converse with them, and they come into the church. Now they are in the car, and on their way. They will have to exercise patience; they will have to put up with a little dust and a few cinders; but they have got their ticket and are in the car of the church, and it is going to swing them right through to heaven, and they are all right—that is the carnal, narrow, and mechanical notion of a great many persons.

But when a man turns his thought to what he is, and what he should be, and is convinced of the multitudinousness of his sin, not only, but of the power of the influences which are perpetually augmenting and strengthening it; when a man sees how many are his evil thoughts and wrong emotions and impulses, and goes into the church as a converted man, what does he do? He is as one who enters a hospital to be cured. He is as one who, being sick, desires to get well. He is as one that is profoundly ignorant and wants to gain an education. There is transformation; but it leaves him at the threshold, in the beginning.

Now, let a man, under such circumstances, undertake to be happy. On what grounds can he be happy, or have peace? How can he have self-complacence and rest in himself? Let a man look at his sin and his obligation with a sincere desire to break off the one and to fulfill the other, and the prospect before him will seem discouraging; and it will seem more and more so as he rises toward perfection—for the better one is, the higher is his criterion.

When the converted man turns his eye on himself he says, "I ought to be happy: my sins are forgiven." What sins do you mean? "I mean those sins that were committed in

days gone by." But are not those sins multiplied every day? Our thoughts sin. Our imagination sins. Our affections sin. We sin both by doing and by not doing, incessantly; and are not men by transgression through infirmities, and by yielding to temptations, multiplying the infractions of laws which are as much laws as those given on Sinai, although they are written in their own souls? Are we not conscious that we are committing sins every day which are, for number, like the sands on the sea-shore?

When Job had a colloquy with his friends, and got the better of them, God appeared in the sacred drama, and unveiled his own perfection; and then Job said, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself." The vision of perfection rebukes imperfection even in the most arrogant and conceited; and in proportion as a man goes up, and has a higher sense of obligation, in that proportion there comes back to him this rebound and refrain: "Miserable sinner; miserable sinner; miserable sinner!" Sin is abounding all the time. Every pulse, every breath, every volition, every single element of our life, if measured by the ideal standard of perfection, or if measured even upon our conception of that nature which is the interpretation of perfect law, is bearing witness against us.

Where, then, shall we find peace and rest? No man, in the contemplation of his conformity to law, can say, "I am living in such a way that I have a right to peace." But men say, "I have peace because Christ gives me his righteousness." I hope you understand that—I do not; nevertheless, there are many things that men do not understand which, in some fumbling sort of way, give them comfort. No matter whether they have an idea of it or not, if they feel that somehow or other, through Christ, they have a right to be happy, they may be happy; but there is no consistent reason which they can give, or which theology can give, why we should have peace. We are covered with a multitude of sins which are unworthy of God, unworthy of the divine government, and even unworthy of manhood. The idea that there is a transfer of God's righteousness to you and to me is a mere

fable. There is no such thing as a transfer of moral quality. Can I transfer my thoughts to my son? I can excite thoughts in him, but I cannot put my thoughts in him. Neither can I transfer my experience to him. No man can take his peace of mind, as though it were susceptible of distribution, and give it to another man. Can a man who is a perfect gentleman, and who has a dozen boorish boys, transfer his politeness to them? Can he give it to them by imputation? And yet men think that God divides his righteousness and perfectness, imputing it to them, and, as it were, saying to them, "You are not perfect, but I will make believe that you are, and in some sense I will take it for granted that you are."

Well now, although this is simply absurd, and very unphilosophical, yet it has a charm in it, because, in a blundering way, by what we might call a *legal fiction*, it carries with it a principle which is sweeter than the roses of June, and more fragrant than beds of mignonette. And what is that? Why, it is this: that we have a God who does not hold a man accountable for violations of law in such a sense as that he will not accept him, love him, and save him, provided his predominant desire, his real endeavor, is to keep the law. If his purpose is that, endless, successive, infinite violations of that purpose do not throw him out of the circle of the divine sympathy. I can interpret it, in a small way.

I take from the streets a rude, rough boy, whose father is a thief, and whose mother is a drunkard. He has been brought up in the school of iniquity; but there is something in him, probably derived from his ancestors far back, that has attracted my sympathy and regard. I bring him to my house, and say to him, "Now, my boy, I want you to grow up into an honest man and a gentleman." I say to him, "You must not steal: you have been educated in theft; but you must break off from that. You must not swear. You must not get angry and throw things at anybody." And I see that, according to the measure of his ability, he means to obey my directions; but when I come home to dinner the servant-girl comes to me and says, "I am going to quit." "Why?" I ask. "Because this boy threw a knife at my

head." I call him to me, and ask him what that means. He says, "She put a flat-iron where it fell on my foot; I thought she had no business to put it there; I was mad, and I threw the knife at her." "But, look here," I say to him, "that was wrong." "Well, I am sorry for it," he says. Then I say, "If you plead that it was an infirmity, and you feel that it was wrong, and assure me that it is your purpose not to repeat it, and to overcome your passion, I will bear with you." "Why will you bear with me?" he says. "I do not see as I am worth keeping. I know I shall swear, I feel so much like it; and I cannot help stealing—I stole a piece of pie this morning." He feels like swearing, he has stolen, he has thrown a knife at the servant's head. This is my precious *protégé* and yet, I say to him, "Be of good heart, my boy, I will get you over all this trouble yet." Why will I? On account of his being so good? No. What is it that saves him? It is my feeling toward him. I try to save him because I am sorry for him, and because I love him. I do not love his imperfection, but I love the sentient creature that he is. I think perhaps I love him more because he needs so much love. It is not the fairest and prettiest child that the mother loves most: it is the poor sickly thing, that stands on the outer circle of his companions when they jump and run, while he limps with a club-foot. She loves that child more than any of her other children. There is something far down in the nature of man which touches divinity where it loves want; and there is no want like dispositional want, or spirit want.

And I say to this thief of the street, this unlicked cub, this miserable creature that I have befriended, "I am not going to give you up; and the reason is, my heart is stirred for you. I am sorry for you in my very soul. All that is good in me goes out toward you. So be courageous, my boy. Do your best. Do not cry any more. Take hold again."

He holds out for a week or ten days, and then down he goes; and we have a "time" once more. I do not want him to feel that he may as well go down as not because he will be forgiven so quick, and will be helped up; but if I am satisfied that he is sorry, that his intent is good, and that his

determination is strong, I pass his misdemeanor by, with perhaps some little emphasis to keep his memory alive, and say, "I do not give you up yet."

Now, that is what is meant when men say that God imputes his righteousness to the sinner. There is no imputation about it. God, by his inherent nature, when he sees men imperfect, crude, stumbling among infinite laws, and breaking them, has compassion on them; not because he has bought the right to do it by a covenant, not because he has a plan that tells him that now he may do it, but because he is God, and because he is large enough and good enough to make good those who are bad, out of the bounty of his own soul.

That is what gives you hope, and it is what gives me hope; not that we are good, but that God is; and that by his providence and grace every willing soul is brought into a school in which, with patience, and gentleness, and forbearance and repeated forgiveness, he is being molded and developed, and brought into that state in which, by-and-by, the flesh shall drop away, and he shall shine as the stars in the firmament. It is that love of God in Christ Jesus which waits for you, which cares for you, which spares you, which succors you, and which stimulates you. The divine nature loves you though you are not lovely, and because you are not lovely, with an infinite sympathy and compassion. It is that love which makes Christ Jesus, dying, the only resource that can reach to the ultimate and infinite wants of the human soul. Jesus Christ came into the world to teach us that God, the Father, loves sinners, loves them in their multitudinous wanderings and stumblings, and by his grace and providence is raising them to the position of sons in glory.

There I have rest, not because I am good, but because I am in such a school of goodness; not because I have kept the law, but because, breaking it, times without number, and oftener than I know, or can register, I have One who loves me enough to bear with all my transgression, and to count it for nothing, so that the essential drift of my being is away from sin and toward holiness. In the contemplation of that I have a peace which the world cannot take away.

Now, so long as you are conscience-bound ; so long as you sit down and cipher, and find a balance against yourself every day, and say that you have no right to be happy because you are insincere, because you promise God that you will do so and so, and do not do it—so long as that state of things continues you will not have peace. For the further you go toward perfection, and the better you become, the more you will find that your sins multiply, and the stronger will be your conviction of sinfulness from the violation of law. The more a man tries to find peace and rest within himself through the fulfillment of law, the further he will drift away from it. But the moment a man says, “I am born in sin ; in iniquity did my mother conceive me ; I was born without a knowledge of righteousness ; I am full of unrevealed laws, I am under a multitude of obligations that I do not understand ; and I stumble ; but my God is large enough in his wisdom and goodness to take care of me, provided only that I want him, and strive toward him,”—the moment a man says that, he has rest.

A wounded soldier lies on the battle-field. The ball has cut an artery in his leg. The charge, thundering on, leaves him behind ; and his life is ebbing away. With feeble effort, he stoops to press the artery and stop the wasting tide of life ; but he grows weaker and weaker, and his courage fails, and in despair he exclaims, “I am dying here alone, and there is no one to bear my last words home to my friends.” Just then, an ambulance comes in sight, and approaches him, and the surgeon, seeing him, runs to his side, and taking him by the leg says, “Is this the only wound ? Then you are saved !” Fainting, the soldier falls back, and as he does so a smile plays about his mouth, and he says to himself, “What I could not do, my surgeon can, and I am saved.” Not because he was well did he feel safe, for he was wounded ; not because he had skill of his own to heal the wounds ; but because he was in the hands of the surgeon who could do it, and in view of his assurance, it was as good as done already.

The soul that feels itself driven by all manner of stormy temptations, battered, distressed, wounded, lacerated, looks

up to the physician of his soul, and, with the inward hearing, hears him say, "Behold, I have found a ransom for thee. Thou art mine. I love thee with an everlasting love. Rest in me, trust me, and, verily, I will crown thee with perfection by and by." The promise of Christ, the faithfulness of Christ, the love of God but partially made known in Christ Jesus, the length and breadth and height and depth of which passes all understanding—that I preach to you, not to lull you into sin, not that you may dishonor manhood by saying, "God is so good that I may do what I have a mind to," but that you may be touched in every generous sentiment, and that all that is honorable in you may thrill with the thought of the God that loves you, and sustains you, and will heal you, and enlarge you, and ennoble you, and make you princes, kings and priests forever in heaven. This God is yours—the God of the littlest child; the God of the poor African; the God of the stumbling Indian of the forest; the God of the rude, the unlettered, the unknowing; the God of those that have done wrong; the God of the jail, the penitentiary, the hospital, and the poorhouse; the God of those that have wandered from the right way; the God of the broken-down woman, whose whole best nature stands like a bright crystal barrier between her and relief; the God of the man of transgression, who has been the enemy of his race; the God of the highest and the lowest, and of every creature intermediate. We are naked and open before Him with whom we have to do; and if we will, we may inherit the infinite love of that God. But, as a man may shut his eyes even to the sun, and seem in midnight, so before the blaze of infinite pity and compassion, if you will, you can shut your eyes, and harden your heart, and lose your God and yourself.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

WE rejoice, our Father, in the manifestation of thyself made to us through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Thou hast not made known to us what we are ourselves, although we are called the sons of God. It doth not yet appear what we shall be. We know that when he shall appear we shall come with him, and be like him; but what is the glory of that likeness, we know not. What are the ranges and the experiences of that transcendent life, when this mortal body shall break away, we cannot understand. We think, straining every power; we fly upon the wings of imagination; we reach toward the height; but we cannot comprehend the love of God in Christ Jesus, nor the fellowship nor the blessedness of the after state in ourselves and in others. We know not that there has been anything so bright that by it we can understand the brightness of the life which is to come. We know not that there has been anything so wise as to teach us the preciousness of that life. We know not that there has been joy so pure and so deep as that it may stand as a symbol of the joys which await those who reach the world of immortality. We rejoice that all power is outrun by which we may manifest to ourselves the glory of the future state. We are content to abide here, though we are burdened; though we feel conscious of shortcoming; though we are not what we should be as the children of God. Though we are in the midst of conscious sinfulness, and of imperfections without number, we nevertheless have the peace of God. Though we are perpetually stirred up by our conscience, and though the law of duty is every day out against us, we have peace through the Lord Jesus Christ. Though we do not deserve to look up to thee, yet we are taught to come boldly with an open face, and to ask, yea, to demand, with infinite importunity, the things which we need. For thou art the blessed One, and thou dost give forth that thou mayest satisfy thine own self, and not merely to fill the measure of our content.

O Lord, our God, we beseech thee that we may have made manifest to us more perfectly this royal way of the soul; that we may be able to drop quite out of thought the way of the body—all those imperfect relations and methods of life and duty and penalty which belong to this lower state; and that we may be enfranchised and lifted up into the citizenship of the higher sphere; that we may know the Ruler that is there, and the law that reigns there, more perfect, more searching, and yet more full of tenderness than any earthly being, dropping infinite bounty and compassion throughout all the world.

Grant, we pray thee, that we may be, not as slaves under the lash, convinced of evil, shrinking, shuddering, and fearing hell, but that we may be filled with sorrowful recognition of sin, as they that are loving, and seeking to harmonize everything, that divine love may be satisfied with us.

We pray that we may have this new life ministered to us from day to day by the Spirit. We cannot ask that the sun may rise in

full shining: grant, at least, that it may be a revealing light in every one of us, shining more and more brightly toward the perfect day.

Give to every one in thy presence, we beseech thee, some portion of this sense of sonship. Give to every one present some sense of right in God, and some sense of safety and security in the love of Christ Jesus. May every one in thy presence feel, whatever he may be in himself, that in the Lord he is rich and strong and safe; and may they who have no Christ, they to whom the name of Christ is empty, they who are without a God, they to whom the glory of the Lord is as darkness—oh, may they be touched in heart, and made to feel how worthless they are, how naked, how hungry, how sick, how sore, how much in need of all things; and may they be brought, through a sense of their infinite necessity, to a recognition of thine infinite bounty, and sit down at last with great delight beneath thy banner of love, and rejoice in thee with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

We beseech thee that thou wilt grant to every one of us thy guiding faith—the faith which works by love. To those who are in the trouble of life; to those who are bearing heavy burdens; to those who are under sharp cares; to those who are in their way and measure wearing the crown of thorns; to all who are going forth oppressed with the cross—oh, minister to them that faith by which they shall have consolation.

If there be those to-day whose hearts are sore with bereavement, whose thoughts are full of tears, we beseech of thee that thou wilt draw near to them. We ask not that their wounds may suddenly be healed to insensibility, but that they may discern what is the blessing of sorrow; that they may feel its tenderness and its enriching power. May they feel, springing out of darkness and trouble, those tendrils which shall fasten them to thee. Grant that they may grow in grace, and that they may know how, learning in the school of affliction, to be clothed with patience and with resignation; that they may know how perpetually to look up to God, and find in him what they may have lacked or lost in those about them.

For mothers whose cradles are empty, we pray; for parents whose companion children are gone before them, we pray. For those who have lost themselves in losing those they love, and are in a mystery and maze and wonderment of grief, we pray. Be gracious to them all. Especially be gracious to those who behold wreck and ruin from which they cannot save their beloved. Draw them near to thee, and in the pang of their Gethsemane be to them as the angels were to thyself, blessed Saviour, and comfort them.

We pray, if there be no medicament for griefs unnamed, if there be no present relief, and they must walk in the flame, grant, at least, that the "form of the Fourth" may be seen, and that the fire may have no dominion over them. Grant to that band which always increases—to those who walk with tears and breathe with sighs, and behold their joys plucked up and withering—grant to them that there may be an ever-opening heaven, a God with them, and that they may feel that in their earthly lack and loss they are laying up treasure in heaven.

Oh, how rich are we in those that are gone before! How many blessed this day are around about thee, for whose going our hearts were broken, but in whose abiding glory now we have learned to rejoice! O Lord God of the redeemed host in heaven! thou that art their light and their sweet delight, art not thou, too, the God of those who are following after them, who are blinded by tears, and who are stumbling by weakness? Thou that leddest thy people like a flock in the wilderness, art thou not still leading thy people through the wilderness? Give forth these truths to those who need the consolation of God.

We beseech of thee that thou wilt be near to all those who are in trouble or doubt; who are in the perplexities of life; who in the way of duty find it too sharp or too steep for human endeavor. Thou art the strength of Israel, and canst give strength to thy creatures; and we beseech thee that thou wilt succor all those who know the right, but who seem to themselves to be feeble and weak therein. We beseech thee that thou wilt be near to all those who are attempting to walk aright in the various duties of life. Teach them how to be more manly; how to gird their loins day by day; how to endure patiently unto the end. We beseech thee that thou wilt grant to all those who are drawing near to the close of life, to all those who seem to themselves to have failed in their earthly career, to all those who see others go past them to fame, and to wealth, and to honor, and to happiness, while they are bereft, and only waiting and longing for the time of their departure—we beseech of thee that thou wilt grant that they may not think that their life consists in the abundance of the things which they possess. May it be theirs to know that God is theirs; that the love of Christ is theirs; that the hope of heaven is theirs; that the eternal blessedness of the other life is theirs; and may they not cast away their confidence, nor think themselves to have failed, when they are heritors of unfading and eternal riches.

We beseech thee that thou wilt be with the old in their growing infirmities. May they learn how to rejoice. May they know that when the stars are dying out, it is because the night is coming to an end; and that soon they shall be in a state of immortal youth, and that they shall see again, and hear again, and feel with sensitive nerve again, and live never more to grow old. May they rejoice, therefore, looking forth with complacency upon the taking down of their tabernacles, knowing that they are to have a house builded of God, eternal in the heavens.

We pray that thou wilt grant thy blessing to rest upon all classes and conditions of men—upon the poor; upon the ignorant; upon the vicious; upon the criminal; upon the outcast; upon those that no man cares for. Grant, we pray thee, that there may be breathed into the hearts of men a deeper humanity, and more love toward those who have erred, and gone out of the way, and fallen into ruin.

We beseech of thee that thou wilt extend the knowledge of Christ throughout all our land, and the knowledge of the Gospel to every hamlet and household. Pity those that are in ignorance. Give them

light. Bless all institutions, and all the labors of thy servants by which evangelization shall go forth with civilization. And may all the nations of the earth at last feel the sacred impulse—the drawing of this mighty force. May all that is barbarous, and cruel, and proud, and hard, and selfish, lose power and die away; and may all that is pure, and wise, and humane, and divine, gather strength, and hold on its way toward that perfect day when all nations shall rejoice in each other, and perfect peace shall reign in the whole earth.

And to the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, shall be praises evermore. *Amen.*



PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

OUR heavenly Father, wilt thou grant to us the consolation of thine own nature. Shine in upon us with the thought of God. We are blinded by selfishness, even the best of us. We can hardly form a conception of such glorious virtue, such beauty of holiness, such disinterestedness, as is in thee, thou that art the Highest, the Fountain of all excellence unblemished. Grant that we may have the help of thy Spirit to discern something of thy royalty, to rejoice in it, to open our hearts to it, and by it to be warned, taught, guided, perfected. Lord Jesus, for thy faithfulness hitherto unrequited, for thy faithfulness that would not be discouraged, nor give us up, for thy faithfulness that never has left us nor forsaken us, and that never will, we render thee thanks. Thou hast fulfilled every promise abundantly, giving us more than we asked or thought. We have nothing to ask. We have only wonder and joy and gratitude to express. Thou infinite Benefactor of the soul, we are glad that thou art such an One as can look with complacency and love upon us, so unworthy, so far from perfectness, so far from the hope of it. O Lord our God, if thou canst find any pleasure in such beings as we are, accept the offerings that we make to thee of ourselves. Have compassion on us by reason of our sin, of our leanness, of our imperfection, and love us into beauty and harmony and immortality.

And to thy name shall be the praise, Father, Son, and Spirit. *Amen.*

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